



for Child Care,
Early Education
and Afterschool Programs

The Program Assessment Arena January 2007

This document contains an overview of the Program Assessment Arena, one of the 5 arenas in STARS as well as resources useful in obtaining 1, 2 or 3 points in this arena.

The resources include

- ∞ the steps to obtain 2 points
- ∞ a bibliography of program assessment tools
- ∞ a guide to creating program improvement plans
- ∞ one of the assessment tools appropriate for obtaining 2 points, the Essential Practices Inventory.

STARS is a quality initiative of the Child Development Division of the Department for Children and Families of the Agency of Human Services, 103 S. Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671. Visit the STARS website at www.STARSstepahead.org. Questions about participating in STARS can be directed to Learning Partners, Inc., the contracted administrators, by phone at (802) 479-5261, by email at learningpartnrs@aol.com or by mail at 214 Elm Street, Barre, VT 05641

Overview of Arena IV, Program Assessment

In the Program Assessment arena, programs assess their environment and practices and have an ongoing plan for improvement and change based on the assessment. Program Assessment involves comparing the program's practices to known standards, such as state regulations, developmentally appropriate practices or practices of accredited programs, and creating a program improvement plan to move the program toward stronger practices.

Points	Standards	Indicators
not rated	The program operates as required by applicable regulations related to curriculum, developmentally appropriate activities, child guidance, child-adult interactions and care giving. Any deficiencies have been remedied and any required corrective action has been completed.	the program is operating according to and in compliance with regulations
1	The program is evaluated using a self-assessment tool and has a written improvement plan based upon findings of self-assessment. Staff members provide input for and receive feedback in the assessment.	submit a program improvement plan, appropriate self-assessment tools must include content that addresses at least: 1) interactions between adults and children, 2) developmentally appropriate program, activities or curriculum, 3) health and safety standards, including indoor and outdoor spaces, 4) relationships and communication with families, and 5) administration, policies, business practices or personnel.
2	The program meets the standards of 1 point (above). The program determines through self-assessment that it has obtained the appropriate minimum score, and has an improvement plan based on this assessment. A CDD-approved STARS Assessor has verified the assessment. Staff members provide input for and receive feedback in the assessment.	submit Assessment Verification Form (provided by assessor) and program improvement plan based on the assessment and prior goals. Programs must obtain a specified score on the assessment to obtain 2 points in this arena. (See document "How to earn 2 points" for more information on assessments and minimum scores.)
3	The program holds a current accreditation and has a written improvement plan based upon findings of an annual self-assessment	verification of accreditation status through NAEYC, NAFCC, NAA or NECPA, program improvement plan or annual report to accrediting body

How to earn 2 points in the Program Assessment Arena

step 1

After doing the self-assessment necessary to achieve 1 point, the program decides when it is ready to achieve 2 points. This means that the program is of a strong quality and it is prepared to invite an independent person to do an observation and assessment of the program to verify those strengths.

If the program has not done a self-assessment for the 1-point level, a comprehensive self assessment is to be done first. STARS does not specify the type of assessment necessary for 1 point; however, the EPI (below) is not a comprehensive assessment. Guidelines and resources are available through technical assistance.

step 2

Decide which of the designated assessment tools you will use for the 2-point assessment.

The tools that can be used are:

The Vermont Essential Practices Inventory (EPI -- appropriate for all program types)

The Clifford and Harms Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) assessment tool appropriate to the program (Early Childhood, Infant-Toddler, School Age, Family Child Care Home)

National Afterschool Association accreditation observation tool (for afterschool programs)

To learn more about these specific tools, contact Learning Partners (479-5261) for an information packet. (The information packet contains brief descriptions of the tools, how to obtain them and a bibliography of resources.)

step 3

Obtain the tool of your choice. If you have not used it before, perform a self-assessment to determine whether the practices and characteristics are found in your program. Review the assessment tool you have chosen and decide whether you are ready to be observed by someone using that tool. Take time to put practices into place consistently so that the program will meet the specific point level needed to pass the assessment (EPI – 85% items passed, overall ERS average of 4 with no scale average less than 3).

step 4

Contact the STARS administration (Learning Partners) to indicate that you are ready to have your program observed by a STARS assessor. Learning Partners will assist the program in identifying the appropriate STARS assessor. Even if programs know a STARS assessor, the STARS administration should be contacted.

step 5

Contact the approved independent assessor to arrange an observation of your program using the tool you have chosen. The assessor and program agree to several possible dates for the observation.

step 6

The assessor visits the program for a minimum of 3 hours and more if necessary to completely assess the full program. The assessor's visit is not scheduled in advance, but occurs on one of the agreed-upon dates.

step 7

The assessor informs the program whether it meets the standard for passing the assessment (see Step 3).

a. If the program was found to meet the standard, the assessor provides the program with a copy or report of the assessment and a form that is to be submitted with the STARS application.

b. If the program was not found to meet the standard, the assessor provides the program with a copy or report of the assessment.

step 8

If the program meets the standard for passing the assessment, the program creates a program improvement plan that reflects the status of previous program goals (done for 1 point) and incorporates the findings of the assessor (a guide to creating a program improvement plan is available from the STARS administrators).

step 9

The program submits the program improvement plan and the approval report from the assessor (with the STARS application) to verify that it has met the standard for 2 points in the Program Assessment arena.

Selected Bibliography of Program Assessment Tools and Resources

Licensed, center based programs:

Bloom, Paula Jorde, Sheerer, Marilyn, & Britz, Joan. 1991. Blueprint for action: Achieving center-based change through staff development, second edition. Mt. Ranier MD: Gryphon House.

Center for the Child Care Workforce. Model Work Standards: Teaching Staff in Center Based Child Care. Washington: American Federation of Teachers. ccw.cleverspin.com

Clifford, Richard, Cryer, Debby & Harms, Thelma. Infant Toddler Rating Scale, revised edition. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Clifford, Richard, Cryer, Debby & Harms, Thelma. Early Childhood Rating Scale, revised edition. 1997. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Program. Reflective Checklist for the Environment. devereuxearlychildhood.org

Administration for Children and Families Region 1 - New England. Self-Assessment Toolkit for Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. 2000. Author www.adf.dhhs.gov/programs/region1/hsh.htm

** NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation criteria. 2005. Washington, DC: Author. naeyc.org -- *NAEYC Early Childhood Program standards*

** National Early Childhood Program Accreditation. Accreditation Standards. Mount Pleasant SC: Author. necpa.net

Colker, Laura & Trister Dodge, Diane. The Creative Curriculum for Preschool Implementation Checklist. Washington D.C, Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Vermont Early Childhood Workgroup. Vermont Core Standards and self-assessment tool for center-based early childhood programs. 1996. Waterbury, VT: Author

** refers to websites of national accrediting organizations recognized in STARS

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Selected Bibliography of Program Assessment Tools and Resources, continued

Registered Family Child Care Homes

Center for the Child Care Workforce. Model Work Standards: Family child care jobs. Washington: American Federation of Teachers. ccw.cleverspin.com

Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition. 1997. Child Development Associate assessment observation instrument for family child care providers. Washington, DC: Author. www.cdacouncil.org

Harms, Thelma & Clifford, Richard. 1989. Family day care rating scale. New York: Teachers College Press.

** National Association for Family Child Care. Provider's self-study workbook: Quality standards for NAFCC accreditation. 1999. Des Moines, IA: Author. nafcc.org (*accreditation standards downloadable*)

Trister Dodge & Colker, Laura. The Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care. 1999. Washington D.C, Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Vermont Early Childhood Workgroup. Vermont Core Standards and self-assessment tool for family child care programs. 2000. Waterbury, VT: Author.

Licensed, after school programs

Jacobs, Ellen, Harms, Thelma & White, Donna. School-Age Care Rating Scale. 1996. New York: Teacher's College Press.

** National Afterschool Association. NAA Standards for Quality School Age Care. naaweb.org

National Association of Elementary School Principals. After-School Programs & the K-8 Principal: Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care. 1999. Virginia: Author naesp.org

New York Afterschool Network. Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool: Planning for Ongoing Program Improvement. 2005. nysan.org

North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs. Self Assessment and Planning for Quality. nccap.net

** refers to websites of national accrediting organizations recognized in STARS

Guide to Creating an Annual Program Improvement Plan

A program improvement plan is a process rather than a specific document. It represents a design for (a) assessing the program, (b) reflecting on its strengths and challenges and (c) implementing plans to promote the program's growth. A written plan summarizes the program's current goals and strategies to reach the goals. Depending on the program and its choices for planning, a program improvement plan could be from 1 page to several.

As an individualized plan for each program, there is no preset form for all program improvement plans. There are, however, many examples and possible documents which could be used (many assessments have guidelines for planning). The information below is useful for those who do not have a sample document or guidelines.

A program improvement plan will:

- Name the program and the primary people involved in the planning
- Name the assessment tool used and the date the assessment was done
- Summarize any progress since the previous program improvement plan, if applicable. Include accomplished goals, goals in progress and goals not attained.
- Considering both the previous program goals and the result of the current assessment, list at least 3 goals the program will address this year to develop the program's environment, curriculum, interactions and routines. (For example, the program wants to enrich the musical experiences of the children.) Three goals is a reasonable number to accomplish in a year. The goals should be meaningful to the program and possible to complete.
- Describe the strategies that will be used to attain the goals. Strategies are the actions and activities needed. (For example, the program will get musical instruments and more varied CDs.)
- Describe the resources needed to attain the goals. Resources are the people, places and things needed. (For example, the program will need money to get the needed materials).
- Have a signature and date it was created. These support the program in knowing year to year when plans are made and who is involved.

The program improvement plan is not the same as an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). The IPDP is a specific person's plan for professional growth such as classes and other professional development opportunities. The program improvement plan refers to the program's practices such as curriculum and environment. These plans emphasize different things, even for those who work alone, such as registered family child care providers.



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Essential Practices Inventory

January 2007

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Introduction to the Essential Practices Inventory

The STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is the Child Development Division's initiative designed to expand the ways providers are rewarded for program quality. One of the five arenas of STARS recognizes achievements in assessing and improving the program for children (Program Assessment arena). At the 1-point level, programs are recognized for performing a self assessment. At the 2-point level, programs are recognized for having strong practices and an independent external assessment. At the 3-point level, programs are recognized for achieving professional accreditation. At each point level, programs submit a program improvement plan. The points in this arena are totaled with the points from the other 4 arenas in STARS for an overall point level and star rating.

The Essential Practices Inventory is one of the possible assessment tools to achieve 2 points in the STARS Program Assessment arena. It consists of 29 observable practices that research has established as essential in considering a program to be a good, solid program. The Inventory can be used in any type of child care, early education and afterschool program, including registered family child care homes, licensed centers, preschool programs, licensed homes and afterschool programs.

The inventory is not as extensive as a full-scale assessment, program accreditation or performance review and is not intended to be. The inventory consists only of observable practices whereas accreditation and other full scale assessments have interview and record review components. Program standards for parent relationships, administration and qualifications are in other arenas of STARS and thus not part of the Essential Practices Inventory.

The procedure for using this Inventory begins with the child care, early education or afterschool program reviewing the 29 practices listed and doing a self-assessment by comparing the program's usual practices to the Essential Practices Inventory. The program takes the time it needs to put any needed practices in place. When the program is satisfied that the essential practices are in place, the program requests a validation visit from a STARS assessor.

The STARS assessor completes the inventory after observing a program for at least 4 hours (consecutive, unless the program day is shorter). Programs with multiple groups would be observed longer, with at least one hour in each group. Each item on the inventory is scored as Yes or No, depending on whether it was seen during the observation. A score of 85% "yes" (25 of 29 items) would be necessary for the program to earn 2 points in the Program Assessment arena of STARS. Programs can not have more than 1 "no" in the areas of Interactions, Environment, Routines and no more than 2 "nos" in the Curriculum area.

The STARS assessor provides the program with a copy of the Inventory showing items passed and not passed as well as an assessment verification form to be submitted with the STARS application. To indicate the program meets the 2-point standard, the program submits a program improvement plan and the assessment verification form showing the program has 85% of these practices in place.

Using the Inventory: Each item in the inventory has a space in the left margin to use in indicating whether the item was consistently observed. It must be fully present to receive credit.

For each item, the information in the top of the box are clarifications – this information indicates the observable behavior that defines the practice. Most of these behaviors should be seen in the program's practices during an observation. The information in the middle of the box are ages and examples of what might be seen for that age group. These examples do not all have to be seen. The empty spaces at the bottom of each box are for notes – such as clarifications and examples of the practices seen during observation.

Essential Practices Inventory

Name of program: _____

Program contact name: _____

Date of observation: _____ Time: _____

Name of observer: _____

Ages served: _____ infants _____ toddlers _____ preschool _____ school age
(check) birth – 18 mos. 19 – 35 mos. 3 to 5 years in k and up

Number of separate groups of children (different rooms or adult-child groupings): _____

Time spent in each group during observation (list times of day each group observed):

Notes:

Number of items passed in section: A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ Total _____
Must pass at least: A 6 items B 4 items C 9 items D 6 items Total - 25

Regulatory violations

Programs must be in compliance with the State of Vermont regulations for their type of program to participate in STARS. Programs cannot pass this inventory if regulatory violations are noted during the observation period with the STARS Assessor.

Many programs believe they are in compliance when in fact they are not. The most common areas where this happens are in health practices, safety, and rigorous hand-washing practices.

As part of assessing the Essential Practices, programs should assess whether all regulations are being followed (or exceeded), especially those listed above.

This program appears to be operating in compliance with all state regulations. _____ yes _____ no
-- If "no" describe concern

A. Interactions among adults and children

1. Adults seem to enjoy children and their work with them. Adults express caring, enjoyment and warmth through behaviors such as physical affection, eye contact, calm tone of voice and smiles.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages eye contact when speaking warm tone of voice smiles, positive affect shows pleasure in accomplishments and interests no harsh tones no child consistently ignored			
(may have some adults who do not show enjoyment, but every child must experience adults who do)			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
responsive to cues holds and carries hugs, snuggles	positive response to emotions, repetitions and other toddler needs	positive response to physical needs and initiations such as questions and requests	distal exchanges may show affection through mild physical contact or verbal bantering
notes:			

2. Children are treated with respect and as individuals. Adults speak to children in friendly, meaningful, courteous, respectful manner. Adults foster a classroom community that welcomes and respects all children.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages every child interacted with positively adults respond to children's initiations within a few seconds adults use please, thank you and other polite language with children feelings responded to or treated with respect, and labeled or named adults place themselves at children's eye level no disrespect or bias shown according to child characteristics (e.g., gender, race, culture) children see themselves represented and reflected in the classroom			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
make distal contact -- smile, wave, eye contact – when engaged elsewhere	allow children to make choices within ability	children have opportunity to direct own activities, participate in group culture	support and respond to children's opinions, self-direction and independence
notes:			

3. Adults support social opportunities between children, and the children are generally responsive and engaged with each other.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages children have opportunities for verbal and nonverbal interactions with other children, and most engage in social exchanges in ways appropriate to their age or ability; The exchanges are more often positive or neutral rather than negative.			
examples of behaviors indicative of interaction or engagement:			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
eye contact vocalizations mobile children approach others	eye contact watch/observe approach/follow vocal/verbal exchanges responds to and initiates play	conversations and narrations watch, approach responds to and initiates play	extensive conversations and social interest among children
notes:			

4. Adults engage in conversation with children.

fully present	
not fully present	

Conversations are meaningful back-and-forth interactions, not just directives or instructions – name things, notice environment, point out relationships, make connections, ask open-ended questions. Conversational turns could be non-verbal (e.g., signs, facial expressions, coos, gazes, gestures – depending on age or ability). Conversations are initiated by child or adult.			
conversations should occur throughout the observation but must also occur during:			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
meals diapering/toileting play	meals diapering/toileting play transitions	meals play transitions	play transitions and greeting
examples of characteristics of the conversations include:			
naming and noticing coos and babbling gestures pausing for the child's response, real or "as if" eye contact child level echoing and responding to communication cues	naming and noticing questions offer information communication prompts such as eye contact, being at child level, responsive repeating back	naming and noticing open-ended questions back and forth exchange offer information communication prompts such as eye contact, being at child level, responsive repeating back	extensive conversations topics of discussions follow child's interest offer information
notes:			

5. Meals and snacks are nutritious and are positive social or community events for adults and children.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages meals and snacks are nutritious and structured for group interaction with a relaxed or casual pace that allows children to enjoy the meal and time children are served child size portions children are encouraged to self feed and self help as is appropriate by age and ability			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
adults sit with children who are eating, eating or feeding is interactive and responsive	adults sit with children, groups eat together, adults create relaxed, supportive setting	adults sit with children, groups eat together, children and adults converse	children use time for connecting or planning, adults may or may not be involved (may or may not eat as a full group, but children socialize when eating)
notes:			

6. Adults guide children towards appropriate behavior and do not use punishment or maltreatment.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages -- these are used consistently throughout the observation (appropriate to age, ability, situation) redirection “I” statements problem solving children are stopped from hurting one another or children are kept safe (directives and commands can occur in the presence of other techniques; these are delivered with a positive tone)	
all ages -- these do not occur punitive discipline, punishment guilt inducement, chastisement physical forcing	angry rebukes ridicule withholding food or play time
notes:	

7. Children attempt to negotiate their interactions and conflicts with one another and adults support them as needed. Children are encouraged to negotiate their interactions and conflicts with one another and, depending on age and ability, children generally determine ways to play or be together.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages Children actively work to negotiate and resolve conflicts, adults actively support children working on resolution in age appropriate ways, non-verbal and verbal resolution behaviors evident (some sort of resolution through communication occurs in program during observation, not all conflicts need to be resolved this way, but there is an overall expectation).			
infants birth – 18 mos. adults support interactions through narration and explain conflicts using age appropriate communication	toddlers 19 – 35 mos. adults guide resolutions and negotiations by narrating, suggesting alternatives, noticing successes	preschool – 3 to 5 years children negotiate and problem solve around resolving conflicts, adult support is given as needed	school age – in k and up children negotiate joint plans, discuss alternatives, resolve conflict through problem solving, may need adult support at times
notes:			

B. Environment

8. The space is organized so that children can take out and put away materials independently, according to the ability of each child.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages storage is well marked and organized, toys are grouped or sorted, materials are within reach for the age (some materials can be stored out of reach for use of adults, but children's materials are accessible)			
infants birth – 18 mos. low shelves, baskets or buckets some area where infants can explore freely	toddlers 19 – 35 mos. shelves to remove and replace items pictures, location or routine indicate where materials go	preschool – 3 to 5 years environment suggests where things go – through pictures, labels, location or routine – adult assistance usually not needed	school age – in k and up materials are accessible and can be taken out and returned independently, adult assistance not needed

9. The space is organized so that areas are well defined.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages different activities take place in different areas compatible activities are located near each other furniture and materials create sub-spaces or break up space clear pathways through spaces routine, location or labels support defining spaces and activities Infant and toddler play area is arranged so that infants can explore freely and safely protected from toddlers			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up

10. Space is ample for the size of the group.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages space to move freely for children and adults, including adaptive equipment space for privacy/single child, small groups and large groups children and adults rarely need to step over or accidentally fall over others			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
space to move freely, not in traffic areas, non mobile infants are protected from toddlers	room to play, other activities or children are not so near as to provide distraction or disruption	room for different activities without interference	ability to separate from others into groups of any size
notes:			

11. All materials, equipment and space are in good repair and of sufficient quantity.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages no broken toys (unless toy value still possible) no broken furniture all aspects of children's environment are functional sufficient equipment and toys for the number of children, little waiting or competing for use
notes:

12. All materials and space are clean.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages space is clean surfaces free of grime indoor toys clean diapering areas disinfected and, if used, paper replaced with each use mouthed toys and other unsanitary items separated or contained and sanitized before re-introduction
notes:

C. Curriculum

(there are materials and there are opportunities, but not necessary for every child to use every opportunity or material during observation)

13. Child-directed activity time occurs for at least 30 continuous minutes during observation session

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages children play, explore, or are free to choose activities for a 30 minute period (minimum) children do not have to have free access to all activities – could choose from limited list			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
notes:			

14. Children have varied opportunities and are provided equipment to engage in large motor experiences that develop emerging skills in coordination, movement, strength and balance.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages at least one opportunity of at least 20 continuous minutes during observation (could be during free play) to use gross motor equipment equipment and materials are appropriate for the age or ability of children served			
examples of toys and materials (must have at least 3 types of toys and materials appropriate to each age served):			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
climbing/crawling ramps sturdy things to pull up with variety of surfaces floor time	climbing structure vehicles variety of surfaces ramps or mats balls	climbing structure balls sports equipment vehicles mats	climbing structure sports equipment balls bicycles mats
notes:			

15. Adults intentionally create opportunities to encourage and foster the capabilities, needs and interests of each child.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages adults observe or monitor children's behavior, interest and developmental level, and plan activities and experiences based on these adults question, interact, provide additional materials or otherwise extend children's play activities and materials are developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate evidence that available activities and materials are purposefully chosen (note evidence) evidence of program philosophy			
Examples include:			
infants birth – 18 mos. interprets actions, gaze direction, vocalizations anticipates needs – physical, cognitive, etc.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos. duplicate toys allows dumping narrates actions anticipates direction of play	preschool – 3 to 5 years Engages in and monitors play, interest provides extensions and variations in response to children participates in and encourages inquiry evidence of VELs current and recent plans are available for review.	school age – in k and up plan for children's needs for physical activity, socialization and "down time"
notes:			

16. Children have access to age appropriate books and other literary materials.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages at least 10 more books than the number of children in the group and other printed material are visible and accessible to each group served books and materials are age appropriate with variety respective of ages served books and materials reflect different lifestyles, races, ethnicity, professions and social classes books and materials are in good repair			
Examples of types of books and materials appropriate to each age (at least 2 types should be present)			
infants birth – 18 mos. board or cloth books picture books photograph albums	toddlers 19 – 35 mos. board books picture books photograph albums homemade books	preschool – 3 to 5 years picture books story or chapter books non-fiction, reference or informational books homemade books	school age – in k and up chapter books non-fiction, reference or informational books variety of reading levels (books could be in accessible library or brought by children)
notes:			

17. Adults freely read with children or for children and routinely model reading.

fully present	
not fully present	

at least one of the following observed for each age group served:			
infants birth – 18 mos. read books aloud look through books, naming and interacting	toddlers 19 – 35 mos. read books aloud read on request	preschool – 3 to 5 years read on request read signs & instructions read books aloud	school age – in k and up read on request read signs & instructions support or orient children to use reading skills provide homework help
notes:			

18. The environment supports literacy through print and pictures.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages pictures, signs, symbols, lists and labels (to orient children to look for meaning and information in visual media) support for children's writing attempts and writing their ideas down (to reinforce the communicative nature of literacy)			
Examples of how the environment and adults support literacy:			
infants birth – 18 mos. pictures of real-world objects appropriate for the age	toddlers 19 – 35 mos. pictures and labels on objects, areas and artwork pictures of real-world objects appropriate for the age	preschool – 3 to 5 years children's writing is supported labels on objects, areas and artwork written rules children's ideas are written down writing supplies are available.	school age – in k and up children's writing is supported games with words (e.g., Boggle), written rules and instructions children's ideas are written down writing supplies are available
notes:			

19. Children have the opportunity, materials, and supportive instruction to build an understanding of numbers, experimentation and repetition and are encouraged to use mathematical and reasoning skills.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages At least one opportunity for either (1) extended play with these materials (materials available during free play or choice time) or (2) an activity that incorporates math/science concepts, such as a walk or a cooking project.			
examples of toys, materials and activities (must have at least 2 types of these appropriate to each age served):			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
Age appropriate objects for mouthing shape sorters stacking toys toys that produce interesting results cause and effect	shape sorters toys with seriation and patterning (ex. stacking) age-appropriate problem solving toys	tools for weight and measurement items to build with problem-solving toys objects to count, sort and create patterns	manipulatives board or card games building sets provide homework help
notes:			

20. Children have varied opportunities and materials to build understanding of science and nature and use their senses to explore the environment.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages At least one opportunity for either (1) extended play with materials, or (2) an activity that incorporates the natural environment			
examples of toys, materials and activities (must have at least 2 types of these appropriate to each age served):			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
shape sorters variety of textures mobiles mirrors “floor time”	Sand, water or other “sensory table” setup two types of blocks materials with textural and composition variety play dough, clay, etc	Sand, water or other “sensory table” setup two types of blocks natural collections toys or tools that invite exploration and inquiry play dough, clay, etc	natural collections toys or tools that invite exploration and inquiry provide homework help
notes:			

21. Evidence of open-ended artistic expression or creativity

fully present	
not fully present	

<p>all ages</p> <p>either (1) materials for creative expression are freely available or available on a regular basis or</p> <p>(2) open-ended artwork is displayed</p> <p>(materials for creative expression can include crayons, markers, pencils, paper, paint, clay, play-dough, scissors, paste, tape, stapler)</p>			
infants birth – 18 mos.	toddlers 19 – 35 mos.	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
<p>art materials do not have to be freely accessible for this age</p> <p>evidence of experiences to foster creative expression</p>	<p>evidence of experiences to foster creative expression</p>	<p>evidence of experiences to foster creative expression</p>	<p>space may not allow artwork to be displayed</p> <p>a variety of art materials are accessible at will</p>
notes:			

22. Musical experiences are evident

fully present	
not fully present	

<p>all ages</p> <p>working cassette, CD, or record player accessible for each group of children (may be shared)</p> <p>tapes, CD's or records represent a variety of musical types - children, popular, classical, ethnic, foreign languages</p> <p>no loud background music, radio or TV that interferes with activities or conversation</p> <p>children or adults spontaneously sing, clap or dance</p> <p>musical instruments are part of the environment (at least one visible)</p>			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
notes:			

23. Pretend/dramatic play props are accessible in the daily routine and are organized for independent use.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages pretend and dramatic play materials reflect a variety of cultural and ethnic sources furniture and materials for pretend play are child-sized appropriately for age			
examples of toys, materials and activities (must have at least 2 types of these appropriate to each age served):			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
objects from life – dolls, food, utensils, clothes pretend play clothing – shoes, scarves, jackets – easily put on and off child sized furnishings	dolls housekeeping area dress-up clothes child sized furnishings	dolls housekeeping area dress-up clothes props representing careers and community roles child sized furnishings	materials for fantasy play or fantasy planning real-world items planning is supported (ex., plays, clubs, projects), completion is not emphasized
notes:			

D. Routines (the overall tenor of the program and its flow through the day)

24. Smooth transitions

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages children are aware of impending changes and transitions by the use of verbal prompts and/or visual cues, materials needed for successive activities prepared in advance, no long periods of waiting, children participate in finishing ongoing activity before going to next, necessary waiting is supported with such things as songs or games ample time allowed for transitions sensitive to age and ability			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
adults describe or explain ongoing actions – e.g., “I’m going to change your diaper” needed materials are on hand	adults alert children of impending change with understandable time referents few or no periods of waiting, transitions are supported as activities	transitions occur with accurate time referents and follow through children participate in transitions reasons for waiting are clear	transitions occur with accurate time referents and follow through children participate in, may initiate, transitions reasons for waiting are clear
notes:			

25. Evidence of routine during the day, but with flexibility for changes in response to daily events and children's needs.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages schedule or routine is obvious (written or spoken), adults extend or adjust experiences in response to children's interests and needs			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
schedule follows infant's natural schedule and rhythms notes:			

26. Routine activities (e.g., dressing, toileting, cleaning up) are given sufficient time for children to participate and are supportive experiences for learning, interacting or practicing skills

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages unhurried routines, adults support children's independence (allow children to do things for themselves, such as dressing and feeding), children help with cleanup, pleasant tones and conversations occur during routines			
routine activities supported in this way include:			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
diapering feeding cleaning sleeping (down & up) dressing	diapering/toileting eating dressing sleeping (down & up) clean up	toileting eating dressing napping (down & up) self-help skills clean up	eating self-help skills clean up
notes:			

27. Children are predominately engaged in activity or routine and adults use child guidance and daily schedule & routine as strategy to support children's learning.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages most of the children, most of the time are involved in behavior appropriate for developmental age or ability -- not "spacing," acting out, flitting, waiting or wandering			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
notes:			

28. Program tone and quality of interactions reflect a calm but engaged atmosphere

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages loudness level appropriate for activity distress or crying quickly attended to staff are warm, responsive and interactive with children Adult voices are not prevalent sounds of laughter			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
notes:			

29. Adults on duty with children at the time are involved with the children.

fully present	
not fully present	

all ages adults spend the majority of the time engaged with the children (playing, talking, observing, watching, documenting their work) and not in planning, preparation, recordkeeping, socializing or maintaining the space			
infants birth – 18 mos	toddlers 19 – 35 mos	preschool – 3 to 5 years	school age – in k and up
adults interact or play with infants even when not feeding, diapering or otherwise doing routine care			adults monitor all children, involvement depends on children's interests, needs or activities
notes:			